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Average and Mark 1911, Vol 17, No. (C), is published match by 15 month Palication, i.e., Faculti Pice, Centech, Con. Interest a crossclean nature frost 1, 1965, at the post office, Centecush, Consult, Consult and Anni 1877. Additional only at Language Association of Faculti Palication. In: Experimental Artificiation in Construction and American Conference on Construction of Con











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THE WILD WEST AT ITS ADVENTUROUS BEST!





























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BAIT FOR GRINGO BAILEY Slim Carson Story By Dick Kraus

BENEATH the glaring sun they rode, five men on horseback, with a pack mule behind. Four of the men rode together in a tight little bunch; their hands were tied behind their backs. Behind these four rode Slim Carson, a stubby carbine lying across his saddle horn. As he rode along, the young border patrolman kent a steady vigil. His keen brown eyes explored the desert on both sides of the rutted trail; piercingly, they questioned every squat boulder, every ocatillo cactus, every steer that munched sparse feed on the range. Slim knew that Gringo Bailey was still on the loose! And, as long as this was true.

he was in grave danger. "Keep moving, you galoots," he ordered sharply, when he saw one of the riders in front of hlm begin to slacken his pace, "We

aim to reach Earle Pass by sundown tomorrow!" The man riding ahead of him twisted his

lips in a sardonic grin. "Kind of in an all-fired hurry, ain't you, Carson," the man taunted. "I sure don't see

why. Here you've got me and the other boys all tied up neater than a mayerick's carcass at slaughter time? All you have to do is get us to Eagle Pass to deliver to the U.S. Marshal. And you don't have a blessed thing to

worry about-" "-nothing but Gringo Bailey!" one of the

other prisoners cut in, chuckling without humor. "You're not worried about a pleasant fellow like him, are you, Carson? Test because Gringo's following us doesn't mean he'd bother vou-"

"Cut the palaver?" Slim Carson interrupted sharply, with a jerk of his carbine! "We're going on to Eagle Pass . . . to the Marshal there! Now, keep riding!"

But, as they rode along the winding trail, with the Rio Grande glinting veilow in the distance, Slim Carson did not feel as confident as he sounded.

It was two days ago that he had heard of the coach holdup at Tackrabbit Falls! Riding at top speed, he had overtaken the fleeing outlaw band that had committed the crimal Thay were led by Gringo Bailey, a hardened, battlescarred hadman of the horder country. Riding and shooting recklessly, the slendar young lawman had captured the sunsels-with the excention of the hoss outlaw! Bailey himself had fied into the brush and taken cover, cowed by Slim's blazingly accurate fire! Rounding up the other four men, and hinding them, the border patrolman had set out to turn them over to the U. S. Marshal at Eagle Pass, Behind them trotted a nack mule, loaded with the loot of the Jackrabbit Falls coach robbery! But that had been two days ago!

The first night, they had stonned to build a fire and rest. But Slim had not dared to sleep, knowing that Gringo was still out there somewhere. And then, on the second day, Slim's hawk-like eyes had detected another rider-betrayed by hoof-stirred dust. It could be none but Gringo Bailey-

"Riding along," mused Slim to himself. "Watching like a hawk. Waiting . . . waiting

for me to fall asleep . . ." Desperately, he shook his head, realizing the imminent danger that was pressing in on

With an effort, the border rider snapped his head up.

"All right," he said hoarsely, "We'll make camp here. Get a little rest! Not sleep! Just rest . . ."

The outlaws grinned at each other as they dismounted clumsily bound hands before them. They had been able to take catnans while riding; they were still fairly wide awake! But Carson was groggy, almost realing with lack of sleen!

A fire was quickly built, food prepared and

Then, as the prisoners stretched out on one side of the fire. Slim propped himself up against a boulder on the other side, carbine across his knee. He would rest for a little

while . . . just a little while. He wouldn't sleep; that wouldn't be safe! But, Inch by inch, Slim's head dropped forward! In splte of his efforts, his eyes closed and he began to doze off.

Suddenly, with a sixth sense sending a frantle warning to his brain, Slim Carson awakened, his eyes opening with a gripping awareness of danger!

awareness of danger! There were the four outlaws, advancing on

They had been creeping up silently—intent on overpowering him in his sleep. He sprang to his feet shouting—"Get back! Get back, less'n you want to eat lead!"

But, even as the four men retreated behind the fire and lay down again, Slim realized that he had no chance! He would fall asleep sooner or later—and, when he did, either the prisoners would get him, or Gringo Bailey would! If only . . .

Then he snapped his fingers!

There was something he could do! And he would have to do it now, while the ground gusk shadowed his movements from the prying eyes of the lurking outlaw out on the prairie. Quickly, he rose, and went to his saddle. Taking a lariat from it, he cut the tightly braided leather rope into short lengths. Then he approached his prisoners.

Then he approached his princent.

Sorry, gent's he ald. "Just to make sure.

Sorry, ben's he ald. "Just to make sure.

legst" Quickly, he did this, and then bound

he prisoners to each other, so they would not

be able to crawd at all. Then he ripped a

spreached the prisoners. "Get to make sure

you don't make any notise—for a while." he

mouth, loosely enough so they would be able

to breaths, and then steeped beath

"It'll be light in about an hour, when the moon comes up," he said. "Gringo Bailey'll be watching from a distance, and I've got to give him some bait, to make him come in! And what could be more tempting than seeing me—lying here asleep?"

Quickly, he drew another saddle blanket from the pack mules. "Got to make a dummy," he mused. "But what'll I stuff it with?" Then he grinned as the answer came to him. "That'll

be perfect . . . just perfect!"

An hour later, the border patrolman lay in a
narrow gully, rifle by his side. Around the

campfire lay the outlaws, unable to move or make a sound, because of their gags! On the other side lay what appeared to be a sleeping figure, under a blanket... Slim grinned. "Perfect bait!" he mused. And then he

"Perfect bait!" he mused. And then he grinned harder. "And he's falling for it! Here he comes!"

Tensed, he bent forward, watching.

Cautiously, Gringo Bailey was creeping

Cautiously, Gringo Bailey was creeping across the prairie toward the campfice. Half-suspecting a trap, the outlaw was being lulled into confidence by the peacefulness of the scene. Closer and closer he came. At last, yards from the fire, the outlaw hesitated. Then, like a savage panther, he sprang forward, gleaming knife uplifted. Victously, he struck with the knife, plunging it into the lone body by the fire.

At this moment, Slim leaped up, carbine leveled.

"Raise 'em! Get 'em up, Gringo!" he shouted. Grunting in surprise, Gringo Bailey whirled, hand going for his revolver. But he shot too late! Slim's first bullet lanced through the air and caught him. in the shoulder! Gasping in agony, the outlaw sank to the ground. Slim Carson came up ouickly, yun still

ready.

But he did not need it, for the outlaw was helpless, writhing in pain. Even as he groaned, Bailey muttered, "You sure fooled me, Carson! What did you have in that dummy?"

THE lawman's boot caught the edge of the saddle blanket and kicked it up. Suddenly revealed in the moonlight were a pile of greenbacks and money bags.

"The loot from your holdup, Bailey," he said fronically. "You were willing to risk jail to grab it—so I figured it would be good bait to draw you in!"

Then Slim began to yawn. "Hope you'll pardon me," he said, "if I go to sleep, just as soon as I bandage your shoulder! I haven't slept for two'days—and I'm tired! Mighty tired . . ."

THE END

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